

## **SOCIAL EDUCATION: BUILDING CHARACTER AND CARING IN THE COMMUNITY**

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### **Abstract**

Social education is an important aspect in shaping individual character and instilling a sense of caring for others in society. This research uses the literature study method to examine this matter. The results reveal that the participatory approach requires students to take an active role in the learning and decision-making process, thus increasing their sense of belonging and responsibility for the surrounding environment. The collaborative approach emphasises the importance of cooperation and interaction between students through group activities that enrich communication and conflict resolution. Reflective approaches encourage students to critically review their own learning experiences, helping to develop self-awareness and personal responsibility. Technological approaches utilise digital devices and platforms to enhance the learning process and enable remote collaboration. Meanwhile, the inquiry approach encourages students to explore important questions through research, thus shaping analytical skills and the ability to investigate. By integrating these various approaches, social education can be more effective in preparing students for future global challenges. Comprehensive and dynamic social education encourages students not only to understand but also to contribute positively to social change in their society. This article asserts that social education integrated with diverse approaches can facilitate the formation of strong character and a high sense of caring, both of which are crucial in creating a just and prosperous society. Therefore, innovative and adaptive approaches need to be continuously developed in the social education curriculum to meet the needs of the times and the challenges of the future.

**Keywords:** Social Education, Character, Care, Society

### **Introduction**

Education is one of the main pillars in building an individual and society. Not only does it serve as a means to transfer knowledge and technical skills, education also plays an important role in shaping social character and attitudes. In this age of globalisation and modernisation, the challenges in fostering character and social awareness are increasing. Waves of information and rapid social change often have an impact on moral values and concern for others.

Social education comes as a solution that can answer these challenges. Social education is a learning process that leads to the development of positive personality and character and increases awareness and concern for the social sphere. This education includes formal education at school, non-formal education outside school, as well as the role of family and society (Sely et al., 2023).

Social education plays an important role in shaping an individual's character because through this educational process, a person receives not only academic

knowledge, but also moral and ethical values. Social education aims to develop emotional, social and moral competencies that are essential for the development of a complete person (Firdaus et al., 2024). By understanding and applying principles such as empathy, tolerance, fairness and responsibility, individuals can function well in social life. The learning process involving discussions, group work, and community projects allows students to experience real situations where they have to deal with them in a good and wise manner, which ultimately forms positive traits and behaviours (Dwiputra & Halimi, 2022).

In addition, social education encourages individuals to realise their role in society and their social responsibilities. This is crucial in creating a harmonious and highly competitive society, where every member of society realises the importance of their personal contribution to the common good (Fadhila & Pandin, 2021). Through social education, students are taught to actively participate in social activities such as volunteering, social work and environmental sustainability efforts. These experiences not only enrich their perspectives on social issues but also motivate them to become agents of positive change in their neighbourhoods. As a result, social education helps to create a generation that is not only intellectually savvy, but also has a strong disposition and cares about the welfare of others (Sitopu et al., 2024).

In recent decades, research has revealed that social education can have a significant impact in shaping the character of individuals who have integrity, empathy and social responsibility. The implementation of social education programmes in schools has been shown to increase students' awareness of social issues and their participation in social activities (Ruhimat et al., 2024). However, the implementation of social education in various countries, including Indonesia, still faces various obstacles, such as the lack of training for educators, the lack of a regular curriculum, and inadequate support from the government and community (Sulyati, 2020); (Guna et al., 2024).

The role of educational institutions in integrating social education into the curriculum has also been highlighted. Effective social education should involve a holistic approach that combines theory and practice with hands-on experience in the field. Active participation from students through extracurricular activities, field projects and community service programmes can enrich their learning experience and broaden their horizons on the importance of social contribution (Shinta, 2024).

However, the biggest challenge in implementing social education is building community awareness and gaining the support of all parties involved. Therefore, it is important to further examine how social education can be effectively applied in various contexts and cultures to achieve the goals of character building and increasing social awareness.

## **Research Methods**

The literature research method, or often referred to as literature study, is one of the research methods that focus on collecting and analysing information from existing

written sources. This research usually involves critically reviewing books, scientific journals, articles, research reports, and other literature sources relevant to the topic under study. (Afiyanti, 2008); (Syahran, 2020); (Sahar, 2008).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Concept of Social Education**

Social education is a learning process that aims to develop each individual's ability to interact effectively in society. This includes social skills, understanding of cultural norms and values, and the ability to make a positive contribution to the community (O'Shaughnessy, 2020). Social education is not only taught through specialised subjects at school, but also through extracurricular activities, daily interactions, family education and life experiences. The main focus of social education is to build character, ethics, social responsibility and the ability to collaborate with others (Cleverdon, 2020).

The scope of social education is vast and covers various aspects of community life. This includes teaching the rights and obligations of citizenship, developing empathy and tolerance for ethnic, religious and cultural differences, as well as improving effective communication skills (Hairiyanto et al., 2024). In addition, social education encourages students to understand and address social issues such as social justice, gender equality and the environment. Through a holistic approach, social education aims to prepare individuals to become active, critical and responsible participating citizens in their communities and the wider world (Kaeng et al., 2022).

### **Social Education and Character Building**

Social education plays an important role in shaping a person's personality, especially in early childhood and adolescence. One of the main goals of social education is to develop moral values, ethics and norms that can help individuals behave responsibly in society. Through social education, students learn to value honesty, integrity, empathy, and a sense of responsibility towards themselves and others (Rusydiyah & Matrapi, 2020). These concepts are integrated into the school curriculum as well as extracurricular activities, such as arts, sports and community service, all of which contribute to the development of a well-rounded personality (Alhamuddin et al., 2022).

Social education also emphasises the importance of good interpersonal skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively, cooperate in teams and resolve conflicts. Healthy and constructive interactions with others are part and parcel of social education, which in turn greatly influences the formation of one's personality (Najib & Nurhasanah, 2023). For example, through participation in group projects or collaborative activities, students learn cooperation, mutual respect, and how to solve problems together. These experiences form important social skills that will be utilised throughout life, both in personal and professional contexts (Hadi, 2022).

Social education also facilitates the reinforcement of positive values through role modelling and exposure to various real-life situations. Teachers, parents and community leaders serve as role models who can inspire students to emulate desirable behaviours and

attitudes (Supa'at & Muslim, 2023). Moreover, through discussions on social issues, community service experiences, and participation in social activities, students are exposed to various perspectives and challenges that enable them to internalise higher moral values. Thus, social education not only helps in shaping individuals' personalities but also prepares them to be responsible and active citizens in their communities (Puspitasari & Rukiyati, 2020).

### **Social Education and Community Care**

Social education plays an important role in shaping individuals' societal awareness. Through a curriculum designed to sensitise students to social issues, such as poverty, injustice and cultural diversity, social education opens students' eyes to the reality of what is happening around them. Class discussions, case studies, and community service projects provide opportunities for students to not only learn about social issues, but also experience firsthand the positive impact they can have on the lives of others (Budiyanto, 2021). Thus, social education becomes an effective tool in building empathy and response to the needs of society.

In addition to studying various social issues, social education also emphasises the importance of concrete actions in expressing concern for the community. Through participation in activities such as charity programmes, volunteering and environmental awareness campaigns, individuals are taught how to realise the social values they have learned (Sulistawati & Fauziah, 2023). The internalisation of such values usually occurs through direct interaction with the beneficiaries of social action, which in turn strengthens the individual's sense of responsibility and commitment to continue making positive contributions to society. This practical approach helps clarify how theories on social awareness can be applied in everyday life (Mulyono et al., 2022).

Social education does not only focus on temporary actions but also on the formation of long-term mindsets that support social sustainability. By building awareness that every individual has a role and responsibility in improving and maintaining collective well-being, social education shapes citizens who are more proactive and full of Solutions (Trisnawati et al., 2022). Sustainable social education initiatives can motivate students to engage in larger and strategic community projects, the goal of which is to create significant and sustainable change. Therefore, social education becomes a strong foundation for individuals to develop deep and sustained caring, forming a generation that is more sensitive and engaged in the social dynamics of their environment (Muslim, 2024).

### **Approaches to Social Education**

An inclusive approach to social education highlights the importance of each individual's participation regardless of their background. Through this approach, students are guided to appreciate diversity and work together with people from diverse backgrounds. Classrooms with an inclusive approach are usually designed to be accessible to all students, including those with special needs. The use of culturally sensitive teaching

materials and the involvement of collaborative activities are clear examples of the implementation of an inclusive approach. As such, it aims to create a fair and equal learning environment where each individual feels valued and accepted (Papouli et al., 2022).

The participatory approach involves students actively in the learning process, not just as passive listeners but as active contributors. It encourages students to engage in discussion, problem solving and collective decision making. Through methods such as group discussions, simulations and role plays, students can explore social issues from various angles and develop their critical and analytical skills (Perbawasari et al., 2020). The participatory approach aims to make learning more relevant and contextualised to students' daily lives, so that they are better prepared to contribute to society as individuals thinking critically and acting on solid social values (Luftikasari, 2022).

An interdisciplinary approach in social education integrates various disciplines to provide a more comprehensive view of social issues. By combining insights from subjects such as history, geography, sociology and economics, this approach helps students understand the complexity of social issues and how they are interrelated (Raz & Killen, 2024). For example, studying climate change through the lens of environmental science, economics and public policy allows students to thoroughly understand its impact and be better equipped to find sustainable solutions. Interdisciplinary approaches encourage students to see the world in depth and realise that solutions to social issues often require collaboration across disciplines (Wulandari et al., 2024).

There are several approaches to help students understand and engage in social learning. One such approach is the project-based approach, where students are given the opportunity to engage directly with real problems in society through a project. They will work in groups to investigate the problem, design a solution and implement it. The project could be an environmental campaign or a poverty alleviation initiative. Through this approach, students can apply their knowledge practically while developing research, analysis, project management, teamwork, and communication skills (Yang, 2022).

Another approach is the reflective approach, where students are invited to take an in-depth look at their experiences and values through a process of reflection. For example, after engaging in community service, students are asked to recount their experiences through journaling while learning the lessons learnt. Through this process, students can understand the connection between theory and practice and foster greater empathy and social responsibility (Pomalingo & Tangahu, 2023).

Finally, the collaborative approach uses group work to achieve social learning objectives. Through discussion and co-operation, students are given the opportunity to exchange ideas in solving problems together. With this approach, students can develop social skills such as communication, negotiation and conflict resolution. Examples are group projects or simulations that require teamwork to succeed (Kusnadi et al., 2023).

The contextual approach in the implementation of social learning focuses on the relevance of the material taught to students' daily life experiences. This method seeks to connect social concepts with real situations that they experience in the environment in

which they live. In this way, students can directly see how social issues affect their lives and society. For example, learning about social inequality through real cases from the local community can make students relate and motivate them to act. The contextual approach helps students understand that social issues are not something abstract and distant, but real and require direct action from them as part of the solution (Harun et al., 2020).

Technological approaches to social learning utilise technological advances to enhance learning and student engagement. The use of digital tools such as online learning platforms, social media and educational apps can expand students' access to relevant information and resources. Technology also enables students to collaborate with peers and experts from different parts of the world (Aulia et al., 2023). For example, through online collaborative projects, students can work with students from other countries to understand global issues such as climate change or human rights. In addition, technologies such as simulations and educational games can make the learning process more interactive and engaging, thus increasing students' motivation to engage in social learning. Thus, technological approaches not only enrich students' learning experiences but also prepare them to participate effectively in an increasingly digitally connected society (Bates, 2021).

The project-based approach requires students to learn by being directly involved in real projects that require research, planning, implementation and evaluation. This model provides opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills in the real world, which not only strengthens understanding but also fosters creativity and critical thinking (Yusfasanti & Machfauzia, 2020). For example, research on environmental issues in their communities can involve students in collecting data, analysing results, and presenting workable solutions. Project-based approaches also encourage individual and group responsibility, as well as the ability to work under specific time and resource constraints (Nugraha et al., 2023).

An interdisciplinary approach in social education involves the integration of various sciences to provide a comprehensive understanding of social issues. By combining various perspectives such as sociology, history, economics and political science, students can understand social issues from various points of view (Musa, 2024). For example, studying the causes of poverty from not only economic but also historical and sociological perspectives can provide a more complete and in-depth picture. This approach helps students realise how different factors influence each other, which is crucial in the analysis of complex social issues (Adawiah, 2021).

Experiential approaches emphasise learning through hands-on experiments and real-life experiences. In the context of social education, this approach can include simulations, role plays and social experiments that allow students to understand and analyse social dynamics in controlled but real situations (Adawiah, 2021). For example, simulations of decision-making in natural disaster situations can help students understand the challenges faced by governments and communities in emergency situations. Such real-life experiences provide first-hand insights into social functioning and power dynamics, as

well as opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem solving (Megiyono et al., 2024).

The critical approach in social education aims to raise critical awareness among students about widespread social injustice and inequality. It encourages students to rigorously critique existing structures and systems and understand how they can influence meaningful social change (Ramona & Supriatna, 2021). Methods such as in-depth discourse analysis, critique of media representations, and case studies of strong civil society movements can be utilised in this approach. For example, students can explore how the media presents minorities and how this affects public opinion. With a critical approach, students are encouraged to become more reflective thinkers and play an active role in fighting for justice and equality in society (Brunsdon & Layne, 2024).

The humanistic approach builds a focus on developing the full human potential and fulfilling students' emotional and psychological needs. It recognises the importance of each individual and encourages a deep appreciation of diversity and individuality. In social education, methods such as honest self-expression, effective conflict mediation, and activities that promote empathy and respect for others are essential (Sulistiawati & Fauziah, 2023). For example, activities that engage students in listening to others' life stories and understanding various perspectives can reinforce a strong sense of empathy and solidarity. The humanistic approach aims to mould individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also full of deep respect and compassion for their fellow humans (Azzahra & Taqwani, 2024).

The participatory approach in social education requires students to be actively involved in the learning process, both in joint decision-making and in the implementation of various activities. This approach emphasises the importance of students' voices and aspirations and recognises that they are significant agents of change in the communities in which they grow up (Siska, 2020). For example, students can be invited to participate in community service projects or in participatory action research where they work with other community members to identify local issues and develop solutions collaboratively. This approach not only increases students' direct involvement but also builds a strong sense of social responsibility and belonging to the community and its problems (Pangestu & Sudrajat, 2020).

The collaborative approach emphasises cooperation and interaction between learners in the learning process. In community education, cooperation can be done through group discussions, group projects and activities that require teamwork. This approach helps learners develop social skills such as communication, negotiation and conflict resolution (Asnawi et al., 2021). For example, learners can work in groups to create strategies to tackle social problems such as homelessness or hunger. Collaboration allows learners to treat differences of opinion and thought as strengths that can enrich the resulting solutions (Roper, 2020).

Reflective approaches ask learners to critically examine their own learning experiences and processes. This approach often involves journaling, reflective discussion

and self-assessment. In community education, reflection can help learners understand their own role in social structures and how they can contribute to positive change (Badeni & Saparahayuningsih, 2021). For example, after engaging in a community project, learners can record and discuss what they learnt, the challenges faced, and how they grew as individuals. This approach helps learners develop self-awareness and personal responsibility in a social learning context (Antara et al., 2024).

Technological approaches utilise digital devices and platforms to support learning. In community education, the use of technologies such as social media, interactive learning apps and online resources can enrich learners' learning experiences. For example, learners can use social media for social awareness campaigns or use data analysis tools to study demographic and economic trends. Technology also enables distance learning and collaboration with learners and experts in different locations, thus expanding the horizons of public education (Ekasari & Nurkhairina, 2021).

The inquiry approach requires students to explore important questions and attempt to find solutions through in-depth research and investigation. In social learning, this method encourages learners to ask questions about social phenomena, collect data, and then analyse the evidence. For example, students could conduct surveys on people's views on certain issues or examine the impact of public policies through case reviews. The inquiry approach develops critical and analytical thinking skills as well as the ability to conduct independent research (Suyadi et al., 2021); (Tubagus et al., 2023); (Aslan & Shiong, 2023).

Thus, each of the above methods can be applied separately or combined to create a richer and more meaningful learning experience for learners. By utilising these diverse methods, social education can be more effective in preparing students to understand and actively and critically participate in their society.

## **Conclusion**

Social education plays a vital role in building students' character and empathy in society. Through various methods such as participatory, collaborative, reflective, technological and inquiry, social education does not only focus on developing academic knowledge but also emphasises the importance of active engagement, cooperation, self-introspection, use of technology and critical investigation. These approaches help students to develop social skills, self-awareness, personal responsibility, and critical thinking skills, all of which are essential for contributing positively to society.

Overall, effective social education can better prepare students to face the social, economic and political challenges in their lives. By equipping students with the necessary knowledge, skills and values, social education can encourage young people to become competent agents of change who are committed to building a just and prosperous society. This is the reason why approaches in social education need to be applied more widely and continuously developed to suit the needs of the times.

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